

God's Word

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:105–112

Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Joshua 1:8–9;

2 Kings 22:8–20; Acts 17:10–12

Today's Scripture: Psalm 19:7–13; 2 Timothy 3:14–15

I. Gifts from God

Psalm 19:7–11

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.
8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.
9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.
The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.
10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.
11 By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

7. Beginning with this verse, the psalmist shifts from general revelation to special revelation. Each of the six lines of Psalm 19:7–9 begins with a noun; these are set in parallel phrases, each expressing something about God's revealed truth. The six nouns are *law* and *statutes* here in verse 7,

"precepts" and "commands" in verse 8, plus "fear" and "decrees" in verse 9.

It's tempting to work through these terms individually to detect minute differences in meaning. But to do so is to risk missing the bigger picture of how the feature of parallelism works in Hebrew poetry. That parallelism is characterized by the use of synonyms to express the same thought. Such parallelism is at work in the first four of the six words noted above: *law*, *statutes*, *precepts*, and *commands*. Each word has specific characteristics, but all four are synonymous.

8. The parallelism in sentence structure explained above continues. The purity and correctness of God's stated requirements produce two results (in addition to those of the previous verse): *giving joy to the heart* and *giving light to the eyes*. Descriptors "right," "upright," and "pure" can describe people. God may also be praised as "upright" (Psalms 25:8; 92:15). But in this verse, these qualities even apply to the directives that come from God.

9. *Fear of the Lord* is known as "the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10), since all wisdom has its source in God. "Fear," in this case, means a reverent respect for God's authority, which also accepts the *decrees of the Lord*. Fear of God is sometimes coupled with

dissain for evil—even the evil that might arise in one's own selfish motives (8:13).

Submission to God's authority means accessing “a fountain of life” (Proverbs 14:27). God's people can be confident that the Creator knows what is best, for “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7).

The word *pure* is often used for ceremonial purity. This can also describe God's words, perhaps by analogy to “pure gold.” To revere God and abide by his words leads to a pure life. As the *righteous* judge, God is always fair and immune to bribes or partiality.

10. David uses a pair of comparisons to highlight the value of God's Word. *Gold* and *honey* are each pleasing and satisfying in their own way, but neither can provide the spiritual riches and nourishment that God's Word can. Even the highest quality of each of these items (the finest gold; honey *from the honeycomb*) will provide only temporary pleasure. Gold cannot refresh the soul; it cannot give lasting joy to the heart.

11. In many Bibles, the words of Jesus are printed in red to call attention to them. What if Bibles were printed in another color whenever words of warning appear? Many verses would bear that color, for numerous warnings can be found within God's Word. Therein lies part of the value of the Scriptures: they are honest in their assessment of the human condition and make very clear the consequences of choosing to reject what God has spoken.

On the other hand, the Scriptures are just as clear concerning the *reward* that comes to those who faithfully keep their message. Both warnings and rewards are seen in passages such as the blessings and curses that Moses set before the Israelites in Deuteronomy 28. The New Testament epistles include an abundance of “very

great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4), but they also contain numerous warnings to Christians. The book of Hebrews provides several examples of both: promises of blessing (Hebrews 4:14–16; 6:9–10; 12:22–24; 13:14) and solemn warnings (2:1–4; 4:12–13; 10:26–31; 12:25).

II. Purpose for the Gifts

Psalm 19:12–13

¹² **But who can discern their own errors?**

Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ **Keep your servant also from willful sins;**
may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

12. The psalm takes a sudden turn as David, in the middle of extolling the greatness of the Lord and the virtues of his Word, pauses to reflect on his personal failures to measure up to the high standards revealed therein. Much the same occurs in Psalm 139, where David praises the Lord for his awareness of every detail of David's life then ends with a prayer for God to examine him and reveal any areas of his life that he finds displeasing. In the previous verse of Psalm 19, David notes the “great reward” awaiting those who have kept the Lord's commandments. Then, looking into his own heart, he wonders, “Have *I* kept them? What if there are *hidden* sins I am unaware of?” Given the context, David is likely referring to secret or unknown thoughts, words, and actions that have not been pleasing to God. David echoes what the prophet Jeremiah declared about the human heart: it is “deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

David's plea for cleansing is similar to his words of repentance in Psalm 51:1–2.

God alone can create a pure heart. Only he can wash our sins so that they are as white as snow. We should also take note of how Psalm 19 concludes: with David's prayer that both his words and his thoughts will be pleasing before the Lord (Psalm 19:14, not in our printed text).

13. *Willful sins* is the category of deliberate, intentional sin, committed not in ignorance but in defiance. Whether the sins are "hidden" (Psalm 19:12) or committed in willful rebellion against the Lord, David wants no part. His prayer brings to mind the example that Jesus set for us in the Lord's Prayer: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13).

However, we note that David did not always follow his own prayer. David is called a man after God's own heart, yet David and the nation were punished because of his presumptuous, sinful pride. His adultery with Bathsheba and his role in the death of Uriah would have a significant effect on his life and the lives of his descendants. Therefore, David well knows that certain types of sin may exert a powerful *rule over* people. We are wise to recognize that the devil may have strongholds of sin in our lives.

The content of the temptations in our high-tech contemporary world is far different from what David faced, though the issues are the same (such as lust, pride, and hatred). God's Word remains our "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17); without it, we leave ourselves vulnerable to "the devil's schemes" (6:11).

2 Timothy 3:14–15

¹⁴ **But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,** ¹⁵ **and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you**

wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

In this letter, Paul is candid with his protégé Timothy about the latter's need for exceptional courage, strength, and spiritual discipline. Paul warns Timothy of the "terrible times" to come in the "last days" (3:1). This is because of the variety of "perilous people" who will oppose Timothy and his message (3:2–9). That message, however, possesses an authority and a power that stands above the times, no matter how perilous they may be.

14. The spotlight is on Timothy, Paul's "son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2). He is the one being encouraged—even commanded—to embrace and practice fully the things he has *learned* and *become convinced of*.

15. The ultimate basis of Timothy's faith and practice is to be the *Holy Scriptures* since "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17, not in our printed text). Because the New Testament as we know it does not exist at the time Paul writes to Timothy, Paul is affirming the texts we know as the Old Testament to be capable of making one *wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus* (compare Luke 24:27; Acts 8:30–35; Romans 1:2–4).

Paul is the one from whom Timothy has "learned" and "become convinced of," regarding the final phrase of the previous verse. To this point in the letter, Paul has been stressing himself as a pattern to follow (2 Timothy 1:8, 13; 2:2–3). Two other patterns for Timothy to follow are those of his own "grandmother Lois" and "mother Eunice" (1:5), since they were undoubtedly the ones who ensured Timothy knew the Scriptures from his childhood days.

Involvement Learning

God's Word

Into the Lesson

Write keywords or phrases from today's Scripture.

Today we will study two passages that give us insight into the role of God's Word, how it affects us each day, and its power in our lives.

Into the Word

Read Psalm 19:7–13. What are the descriptions the psalmist uses about God's Word?

How does the psalmist explain the effect of God's Word on those who listen to it?

What do these verses reveal about God and his desires for his people?

How can you apply the wisdom of these verses to your relationship with God?

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17. What are some of this passage's descriptions of God's Word?

What do these verses teach us about the importance of Scripture?

What do these verses teach us about the influence of spiritual role models and influences?

Key Text

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
—2 Timothy 3:16–17

Into Life

Write a plan to study God's Word for guidance and wisdom in the week ahead.

Thought to Remember

Keep the words of Scripture—and they will keep you.